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**SUBJECT MATTER: Governor's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments
H.B. #5037 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING
June 30, 2023**

Dear Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Carmen R Correa-Rios, and I have been the Executive Director of one of the five Independent Living Centers in CT. for the last two years. Our Center is in West Haven and serves the Greater New Haven Area, the Shoreline, and part of the Valley.

I started working at the Independent Living Center 25 years ago, and in those years, I held different job positions. While employed at the Independent Living Center, I experience a lot of joy and gratification in helping people with disabilities achieve their goals and dreams. As a person of the minority and an individual with a Mental Disability, I face many of the same barriers that my consumers face daily. I think we have come a long way in helping and supporting the disability community to overcome a lot of issues and challenges. I am an example of how a good support system can help someone become a productive individual for their community regardless of their disability, but as an Administrator I also know how difficult it is to do the job when you have a constant worry about funding. Every year we come in front of you asking to increase our budget, and some of those years, we asked to restore our funding. This year, I exhort the Members of the Appropriations Committee to take a close look at what Independent Living Centers do; to listen to the stories on how Independent Living Services change lives; how we are very easy to access and how we respond to emergencies. No one with an emergency should be put on a waiting list, for lack of resources or lack of staff to provide the services, due to lack of funding. **I am asking the State of CT to increase State funding to the Independent Living Centers by \$1 million.**

Connecticut's five Independent Living Centers do extraordinary work with limited funding; we know we did a great job during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

We save the State of CT money in so many ways, by helping people find and maintain jobs, by transitioning people out of nursing homes and prevent institutionalization, by teaching Independent Living Skills, by providing Peer Support, benefits counseling, and in general by reducing the dependence of people with disabilities on State services.

Respectfully submitted by,
Carmen R Correa-Rios